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WELSH MUSIC.—No. III.

—003—

To the EDITOR of the CAMBRO-BRITON.

SIR,—Having, in my preceding letters, made such general observations, as I deemed necessary, I shall, without any farther preamble, notice a portion of the Welsh Melodies.

“*Rhyfelgyrch Gwŷr Harlech*,” or *The March of the Men of Harlech*, is an energetic composition, in the style of “*Scots wha ha’e wi’ Wallace bled*,” but with a much greater variety of modulation. When the Denbighshire Militia were for many years, during the late wars, from their native county, their Colonel, the patriotic Sir W. W. Wynn, invariably ordered his band at all grand reviews, to play this fine martial air.

“*Morfa Rhuddlan* *,” or *The Marsh of Rhuddlan*, has been already mentioned. It is a sweetly plaintive air, in *G minor*. Our bards have written many songs to this tune, and some of the singers chaunt *Pennillion* to it. The commencement of the second part in the relative *major* key, *B flat*, bursts upon us, like the last effort of the unconquered spirit of a dying hero.

“*Hela’r Ysgyfarnog*,” or *Hunting the Hare*, is a very lively air, and often introduced in dramatic pieces. One of Matthews’s best songs, in his “*Trip to Paris*,” was to this tune; and G. A. Stevens’s celebrated song of “*Songs of Shepherds*” is adapted to it.

“*Ar hŷd y Nôs*,” or *The live long Night*.—Of all the Welsh airs this perhaps is the most popular in England, partly owing to its own beauty, and partly to the pathetic words, which were written to it, (by Mrs. Opie I believe) commencing

“ Here beneath a willow sleepeth
Poor Mary Anne.”

There is scarcely a composer who has not written variations on this melody, particularly for the harp. And lately Liston, the actor, has introduced a comic parody on it, which he sings, riding on an Ass, and wherein the simple burthen of the original is burlesqued into “*Ah! hide your Nose*.”

* *Morfa Rhuddlan*, on the banks of the Clwyd in Flintshire, was the scene of many battles between the Welsh and the Saxons. At the memorable conflict of 795 the Welsh were unsuccessful, and their monarch CARADOC slain.

In Wales it is considered by the prize-singers as a mere bagatelle, and generally introduced as the last strain at convivial meetings, when extempore stanzas are sung to it, alternately, by the company. The words, adapted to this air in the selection before me, commence thus :

“ Sweet the tale of minstrels merry
Ar hyd y nos,
 Sweet the rest of herdsmen weary
Ar hyd y nos;
 And to hearts opprest with sorrow,
 Forced the mask of joy to borrow,
 Comfort is there till the morrow,
Ar hyd y nos.”*

“ *Glân Meddwdod Mwyn,*” or *Good humoured and fairly tipsy*.—It is impossible to give a faithful translation of *Glân meddwdod mwyn*. The air is a very beautiful one, and very frequently sung in Wales; as a two-part song it is exceedingly effective. Many Pennillion on various subjects are chaunted to this tune, the metre of which is long, consisting of eleven syllables: e. g.

“ If friendship and love be not blessings divine,
 In life there’s no pleasure, no music in song.”

“ *Llwyn Onn,*” or *The Ash Grove*.—In my first letter I stated, that the celebrated song in the Beggar’s Opera of “ Cease your Funning ” is to this air a little varied. So also is “ Beauty in Tears,” sung by Mr. Braham, in *Lodoiska*. This melody is a great favourite among the singers with the harp; but it requires an extensive compass of voice to do it justice. The metre of the stanzas, which are sung to it, is long like the one just mentioned; yet the professed singer will introduce Pennillion of different measures and lengths, by allowing the harper to play a few bars alone, and will contrive to finish, with the nicest precision, with the air. This is a peculiarity belonging to the Welsh mode of singing with the harp, which I shall more fully explain on another occasion.

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Oct. 5 1819

JOHN PARRY.

* The burthen “ *Ar hyd y nos,*” which means literally “ during the night,” is introduced with propriety here, as the English reader may perceive.